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ABSTRACT

The Fall 1972 issue of this publication focuses on oral interpretation, readers theatre, and creative dramatics. The lead article is on the subject of readers theatre for teaching interpretation to elementary school children. Two articles discuss the roles of creative dramatics and readers theatre in the high school curriculum. Relationships between oral interpretation and literature analysis and appreciation are discussed in two articles. One essay deals with the techniques of acting and interpretation, with emphasis on contrasting the two skills. (RN)

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NOTE

This issue marks the completion of the term of office for your editor and editorial board of ISTJ. To the current contributors, as well as those of the previous two years, we extend our thanks for the stimulus brought to our field by their articles.

Ralph Lane, Editor
ISTJ

TEACHING ORAL INTERPRETATION TO CHILDREN THROUGH READERS THEATRE

MARGARET PARRET

Is it not surprising that in this day of mass media, when scarcely a child in the United States is more than a minute away from 'where the action is' — be it war, love-making, wild kingdoms — greater numbers of them flock to libraries for story hours? In one small town, Colfax, Illinois, 2086 children's books were circulated during an eight week period; seventy children were reading these; thirty regularly, voluntarily attended listening hours. In the small town of Towanda, fifteen children came weekly to hear the memories and forebodings of past generations as handed down to them in myth and folk lore. During July, twenty-seven small children sat wide-eyed on the floor of the Normal Public Library to hear Carl Sandberg's "Huckabuck" family, giggling about Pony-Pony and Jonas-Jonas Huckabuck, pensive over the 'shining silver slipper buckle that could change your luck from good to bad or from bad to good.'

Lloyd Alexander, Professor of Children's Literature at Temple University, writer himself of children's books says, "When so much of our leisure, for adults as well as children, comes pre-programmed, predigested, pre-packaged and encapsulated in plastic, the joy of reading aloud has the impact of something almost revolutionary in its novelty."[1]

Since children are great doers as well as listeners, childhood is the time for giving to them experience in reading aloud, for developing in them the art of interpreting the printed page. I know of no better way of accomplishing this than through a very elementary use of the Readers Theatre production.

Readers Theatre is highly motivating as a middle and upper grade activity. The semi-acting gives abondon to the mere handling of the book. The young reader masters the skill of increasing his eye span so that he can react to his fellow actor-readers. He walks to the window; he stamps his foot in rage. Images of the printed page come alive for the viewer, too. Rather than something dull to skip over, descriptive passages take on new importance — the scene must be set, the mood established, transitions suggested vividly, provocative action pictured. There is much to look at — many readers, many parts, variety of levels, — and much to hear. The English language, indeed becomes beautiful, as evidenced in such passages as this from Kay Seredy's, *The White Stag*:

> Night fell, softly spreading its wings of silence over the sleeping camp. Sentry fires glowed for awhile; then closed their eyes and only the stars, vigilant sentinels of the night, kept watch over the earth.[2]

Characters come alive in the shared reading aloud of Readers Theatre, and children are led to see that the better constructed the book, the more believable are its characters. Mr. Alexander says, "Whatever a child's interest, personality, or taste, whatever is of immediate and pressing concern in his own life and growth, there's a book — perhaps a hundred — ...that will speak directly to him. Not only a book, but an excellent one."[3] Book characters that children themselves 'have been' become lifelong friends to them.

Jean Karl in the article "A Children's Editor Looks at Excellence in Children's Books" says,

> The truly excellent book...is that book which allows the reader to experience something worth while that he could not experience for himself or to transform himself into another person, to put himself inside another point of view for just a little while."[4]

A few avid readers achieve this kind of satisfaction alone, curled up in a chair with a book. Many, many more can be helped into this vicarious joy through Readers Theatre productions of excellent book selections.

For use in the elementary school, most classrooms are ideal for staging Readers Theatre productions. The audience is at hand; projection of voices is no problem. The aspect of Readers Theatre causing it to sometimes be called 'theatre of the mind' depends upon audience involvement (mental) and with physical intimacy of the classroom, a teacher may more easily help readers achieve a message/sender/receiver/feedback relationship that is important in interpreting literature.

Children like the challenge of making the very real work room become a place of make-believe with just suggestive props such as stools, desks, metal wastebaskets to stand on, blackboard sketches, and hand made spot lights that require no extra voltage.

For those teachers who utilize an individualized reading program, the selections of stories, as with creative dramatics, may vary in complexity and difficulty. The important thing is to create an atmosphere that fosters interest in sharing ideas from books. If two or three children have read *The Courage of Sarah Noble,* by Dalgliesh, they will easily interest others in reading it if they know they can make a Readers Theatre presentation of the book. That simple story could very likely lead to the more complex pioneer novel, *Caddie Woodlawn* (Brink) that delights so many youngsters. Dramatization works magic for reading, and before long a pioneer "kick" would include books by Rebecca Caudill, *Contrary Jenkins* and *Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charley?*

In addition to those tried and true classic or near classic (such as E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web,* A.A. Milnes dramatization of Kenneth Graham's *Wind in the Willows* called *Toad of Toad Hall*) there are literally hundreds of books that lend themselves to Readers Theatre with children, particularly many selections from what has been termed 'new realism' in children's literature. *Harriet, The Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh provides humor and pathos and speaks directly to children of 'misunderstood adults'. Books by Vera and Bill Cleaver: *Where the Lilies Bloom; Ellen Grae; Grover; The Mock Revolt;* deal with deprivation, despair, and courage of today's children. The Newberry medal winner, *Sounder,* by William Armstrong, is a book of powerful realism about a poverty stricken boy who is sustained by his will to learn to read and by his mother's belief and faith that 'the lord do powerful things'. *The Pushcart War* by Jean Merrill is a hilarious satire with great aural appeal. Norton Justers' *The Phantom Toll Booth* is a modern fantasy, full of incidents for group approach.

In the personification of animal category, the Robert Lawson books are sure-fire and ageless: *Tough Winter; Mr. Twig's Mistake; Ben and Me; Mr. Revere and I.* George Selden's *A Cricket in Times Square* and its sequel, *Tucker's Countryside,* provide many memorable moments. Randall Jarrell's book, *The Bat Poet* thrills all children who bring it alive, aloud. Ben Lucien Burman's *High Water at Catfish Bend* attacks problems of ecology in subtle, non-moralizing prose. These are but a few of the fast expanding children's books that contain "evocative power, compelling characters, action, enriched language, and wholeness" — Coger and White's prerequisites for Readers Theatre literature.[5]

The experience of discussing and cutting a book for presentation contributes significantly to the communicative value of Readers Theatre activity. The author's message comes in for scrutiny; children's perception, understanding of literature is sharpened. There is continuing effort to develop a close personalized relationship between the readers and their audience, (other children) with emphasis primarily upon the aural appeal. The receivers' attention concentrates upon the literature or upon the source/message. George Steiner says,

> In that great discourse with the living dead which we call reading, our role is not a passive one...we engage the presence, the voice of the book. We allow it entry, though not unguarded, into our inmost."[6]

Books have much to say "to those who would ask what coexistence and interaction are possible between humanism, between the idea of literate communication and the

present shapes of history."[3]

Children find themselves and their problems in books. Alison Moxley, writing in *The Library Journal* says,

> People seem to be forgetting that in order to commit yourself, you must know yourself. Reading is still one of the ways through which we can reach that cardinal knowledge; reading, that is, with pleasure, willingly 'wasting' time — not reading with the Evelyn Wood-like desparation to swallow X words per second. It is just what you may get from a book but the very act of choosing it which will tell you something about yourself, even what you are acknowledging and/or escaping within yourself.[4]

Through Readers Theatre children will find that the first reading of a book is but the beginning of an experience. Finding something of one's self follows, and sharing that something with listeners completes it.

In discussing episodes to be shared from the life of Harriet M. Welch in a Readers Theatre production of *Harriet, The Spy* by Louise Fitshugh, some of eight sixth graders were overheard to say in their preparation:

> I feel sorry for Harriet. She's hateful because her parents are such idiots. I feel just like her sometimes.
>
> She's lucky to have someone like 'old Golly', her nurse, to understand her moods, though.
>
> Harriet's pretty sharp. How do some of those things she says grab you?
>
> What ones you thinking about?
>
> O, about her teacher, Miss Elston, for example: 'Miss Elston is one of those people you don't bother to think about twice.'
>
> Yeah — and what she says about Mr. and Mrs. Robinson: 'Mr. and Mrs. Robinson think they're perfect. How dreadful it would be to be perfect. Perfect people are such bores. I'm glad I'm not perfect.'

Finally, Readers Theatre experiences are great for establishing pupil-teacher rapport. They are almost always an introduction to good books likely to be missed otherwise. In this day of mass media impact, teachers will be thanked for refining an intimacy of artful reading aloud that makes for a reaction of spirit upon spirit.

NOTES

[1]Lloyd Alexander. From the forward to *Introducing Books: A Guide For The Middle Grades* by John Gillespie and Diana Lembo (New York & London: R.R. Bowken Company, 1970) p. XIII.

[2]Kate Seredy, *The White Stag* (New York: The Viking Press, 1938), p. 90.

[3]Lloyd Alexander, *op cit*, p. XII.

[4]Jean Karl, "A Children's Editor Looks at Excellence In Children's Books." *The Horn-book*, (February, 1967), p. 32.

[5]Irene Coger and Melvin White, *Readers Theatre Handbook, A Dramatic Approach to Literature* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman and Co., 1967), p. 21.

[6]George Steiner, *Language and Silence, Essays On Language, Literature, and The Inhuman.* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1967), p. 10.

[7]George Steiner, *Ibid*, p. VIII.

[8]Alison Moxley, "The Real Thing, What Will It Be?" *Wilson Library Journal* (October, 1970), p. 162.

CREATIVE DRAMA AND THE HIGH SCHOOL

JOHN R. SHARPHAM

Creative drama, or creative dramatics, are terms familiar to most high school teachers. They refer to a process of teaching that utilizes the spontaneous playmaking of children. This process is used quite widely in the elementary classroom and it can be used in the high school situation as well - not only as a means to an end, but as an important end in itself. It is the purpose of this paper to explore some of the possibilities of creative drama for the high school, giving some specific examples of how creative drama is being used at the secondary school level in England.

Creative drama is a process that allows each child to develop through exploration and discovery, to shape a self-concept and a social awareness in a skillfully structured learning situation. The emphasis is on development by doing, and the development sought is the development of each child. Such activity has little or nothing to do with the preparation of children for stage careers, nor with the production of performances before an invited audience. The emphasis is on the child's participation, his "doing" (integral to the concept of "drama"), and this work should always start with the child and *his* dramatic imagination. The child, and the child's development, are at the center of any program in creative drama.

Such a concept of creative drama fits nicely into the elementary school program, for it is here that the child is nurtured and seen to grow. Beginning steps are taken; he learns to read, to write, to calculate, to learn about himself and to get along with others. At the high school level young people are caught up in programs designed to prepare them for adult life, and much of the curriculum has to do with preparation for later life and for earning a living. Where does a subject like creative drama fit in the overall framework of secondary education?

The secondary school should do more than educate its students in skills needed for earning a living. It is questionable, in fact, if many of these skills can be taught efficiently by the schools. What then is the concern of the high school and the high school teacher? David Holbrook answers it this way:

> We have no need to concern ourselves, even if it were correct to do so with education for earning a living: we educate for living...And saving thus time and energy we may spend it on developing, through the arts subjects, powers of being rather than knowing.[1]

Creative drama is concerned with the "powers of being," and these are as important for the young adult as for the young child. Creative drama is a vital process, not only for the elementary school, but for the high school as well.

Creative drama is used by many high school drama and speech teachers in the United States as an introductory activity, or for "loosening-up". They will use improvisation exercises as a preparation for the later acting out of a scripted play. Some teachers of English Literature use creative drama as a means of enriching the students awareness of the novel or poem they are studying. In both cases creative drama is a mean, not an end in itself.

The basis of creative drama comes from the individual participant - it is his activity - and it is an activity available to all. The production of a play for an audience can often exclude some students, while time and interest are given to those students gifted or interested in performing a structured form before an audience. Often the performance is a vehicle for the director's imagination rather than the imagination of the participants. Now the putting on of plays is an important part of the work of many teachers in the secondary schools and it requires a great deal of skill, time and patience. Creative drama, however, does not need to function only as a subsidiary element in theatre work, or in the Speech or English classroom.

In England creative drama is a subject in its own right in a great many high schools. This author was fortunate to study creative drama at the secondary level in England, to

meet with and observe the work of leaders like Peter Slade, Dorothy Keathcote, E.J. Burton and Brian Way, and to travel throughout the country visiting and observing schools and talking with the drama teachers.[2] The philosophy for using creative drama as a subject in its own right is that it helps the individual develop self-expression and self-awareness, encourages group participation and sharing, and provides a safe and legal environment for exploration of possible life situations. These humane goals for creative drama are similar to goals often expressed for participation in theatre activity,[3] though creative drama in England is not the same as theatre work, and may indeed function without any contact with theatre or theatre experience. Such experience is available to interested students elsewhere in the school program. In many of the high schools visited creative drama was being taken by all students up to the age of fifteen in the school. Creative drama as it is taught in these schools does not require an audience and does not need to be performed as a polished, finished product.

The difference between creative drama and theatre in England is expressed clearly by Brian Way when he writes, "...'theatre' is largely concerned with *communication* between actors and an audience; 'drama' is largely concerned with experience by the participants, irrespective of any function of communication to an audience."[4] and "Here again is the difference between theatre and drama; schools do not exist to develop actors, but to develop people..."[5]

The function of the creative drama teachers in England is a guide or facilitator, not as a director, though in beginning lessons he may shape all or most of the activities. As the students progress direction passes more and more to them, so that the activity is drawn more and more from their experience. The teacher's role then is as a resource person to help out when and if needed.

Many of the teaching techniques used in beginning lessons were similar to activities used by speech and drama teachers in the United States. Exercises in sense-awareness, imagination, movement, shapes and sizes in available space, and characterization exercises were utilized. The teachers tried to develop an atmosphere in which the students could develop their own ideas and many lessons were left open-ended so that the students would supply the direction.

One such beginning lesson with a group of 14 year old boys and girls took place in the school drama studio, which was open in area with some rostra (scattered) about the floor for levels. The lesson began with warm-up exercises, movement of fingers, arms, shoulders, then toes, legs and the whole body. The students became puppets controlled by the teacher who directed their movement. Relaxation work was led by the teacher.

Then the teacher gave the following directions: "Very slowly, make yourselves as small as you can - very slowly, make yourselves grow to be as large as you can. Now see how twisted you can make yourself. Relax. Now cement is being pored into your body through your finger-tips - you struggle against it but gradually become solid; make a nice, interesting frozen position. Start from any position you wish."

The students next worked in pairs. They began a mirror-game, trying to work as one. From this they worked out shapes they could make together. Discussion followed the making of the shapes together. Then the teacher outlined the following story: Half of you are struggling through a desert. You are thirsty, heat-crazed and come upon this pool of water. You drink your fill and play in the water until you realize there are some strange human shapes on the other side, twisted, grotesque statues. You move forward and touch one and as you do you realize you are turning into a statue as the magic of the pool works on you. As you become stone the statue you touched comes back to life. Get your partner, think about your shapes and begin.

The students worked at this using the whole room with the "statues" at one end on the rostra. Colored lights were used also, and the activity began. There was a change over as both groups worked through the journey in the desert. Discussion followed, led by the teacher, and feelings about the situation were explored. The teacher directed the whole lesson in an open, friendly manner and pointed out that in later lessons the students would direct the activity much more, drawing on their own experiences.

In another lesson in another school 25 boys and girls were working in small groups of five and six students creating their own plays. Each group worked in its own area within

a large hall. The students were completely engrossed in their work and it was obviously significant for them. They were exploring some of the different kinds of relationships that can exist between people. The teacher moved from group to group, asking a question or giving assistance when it was asked for. Good use was made of space and at no time did any group violate the space of another group or interrupt them in any way.

The individual "plays" being worked on were: (1) a bicycle factory in which the owner was trying to help a customer but one of the mechanics kept interrupting because he knew much more than his boss; (2) a group working in a shoe shop, all girls and friends, but tension was beginning to creep in over who was the best saleswoman; (3) a spy who had to make "contact" in a crowded public house and who was not sure of his contact with time running out; and (4) a pickle factory in which the women were the bosses and the men the workers.

The bicycle shop play was highly complex exploring the delicate balance of the owner's relationship with his employees. The students had decided on this social situation themselves and were interested in how the characters might react to each other in the situation. They had created a conflict situation by having a customer come into the shop to complain about some repair work about which the owner felt responsible but an employee knew more.

At the end of the lesson each group had a brief discussion with the teacher to inform him of progress made. Each week more aspects would be added and developed, and eventually the groups would share their work with each other.

The Devon County Drama Staff has used a different approach with creative drama in the high schools in Devon. They have created a framework out of an historical event within which the teenagers are encouraged to explore a variety of possibilities. The project, called "Scar - the Story of a Copper Mine" is based on the history of the Devon Great Consolidated Copper Mine in the Tamar Valley 1844-1900. The material was researched in depth before being made available to the schools in pupil-packs and teacher's boxes. The story is related to the area in which the students live. Preliminary work involved meetings with the Staff and teachers in the schools, not only the drama teacher, but teachers of Science, English, Social Studies, Music, Economics and Math. The project was aimed to involve young people 14-16 years in social, economic and political problems through the dramatic exploration of an historical event.

Sixty students worked for the whole school day with eight leaders from Devon Drama Staff exploring within the framework of the historical facts about the mine. Working in small groups the students were given facts about the period such as living conditions, food prices, types of clothes and education levels. They were then encouraged to construct farm-homes and characters to go with them and so build up in drama a community of tenant farmers of the 1840's. Then, once this was established they were deprived of their land and homes and given the choice of becoming miners or going to the poorhouse. Within the dramatic context the students explored the social questions of this act and then were given some basic instruction in copper mining, setting charges and drilling and the ways of shifting the stone to the surface. Using rostra, pieces of wood and cloth which they had used for their homes the students created a mine shaft to act as the focal point for the mining. The students were taught how to "bid for a pitch" and then began mining. Accidents, tunnel collapses and a grievance meeting over poor living conditions and pay all were explored within the dramatic framework that had been created. At the end of the day the students had been involved both intellectually and emotionally and had many questions they wished to ask and points they wanted to discuss. These would be taken up by their teachers in later classes, where follow-up work had been prepared.

"Scar" used drama as the core for a number of different educational experiences, combining different areas of the curriculum. It was planned to visit each school with the project so that all teenagers 14-16 years in Devon would be exposed to this experience. The students were encouraged with this experience to question and discover on the basis of their involvement.

These three examples of creative drama in the English high school give some idea of the diversity that is possible. In England creative drama is a postive and substantial

teaching process that is used in the high schools with and for teenagers. It is an activity in its own right having its own place in the curriculum. It is not the same as theatre work and does not have contact with the theatre activity in the school.

It is possible that some teachers in the United States would be interested in developing more in the area of creative drama. Many teachers now use it in different ways to other ends. Perhaps it is possible to develop creative drama as a subject in its own right at the secondary level. What is happening in England could well serve as a model.

NOTES

[1]David Holbrook, *English for Maturity* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 19-20.

[2]For a full description of this study see John R. Sharpham, "A Descriptive Study of Creative Drama at the Secondary Level in England", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, (University of Colorado, 1972).

[3]See Joseph L. Peluso, *A Survey of the Status of Theatre in United States High Schools* (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Theatre Association, Inc., 1970) p. 9.

[4]Brian Way, *Development Through Drama* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., LTD., 1967), pp. 2-3.

[5]*Ibid.* p. 15.

ORAL INTERPRETATION AND THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE

WALLACE A. BACON

Since the Dartmouth Conference on the teaching of literature in schools in England and America,[1] there has been an increasing interest in what has sometimes been called the "dramatic method" of introducing young students to literature in its various forms. Essentially, this method has involved creative dramatics and oral interpretation, and teachers of English have been quick to respond to what has seemed to many of them a very new approach to their subject. Little of it has seemed very new to teachers of Speech, though many of us have been happy to see the oral experience grow.

The upcoming convention of the National Council of Teachers of English to be held in Minneapolis on November 23-25, 1973, indicates something of this growth. There is a program devoted to "Drama and Live Theater in the Secondary School," for example. There is a meeting devoted to "The Verse Chorus." Several meetings are concerned with films and media presentation. Robert Breen and I will lead a discussion on interpretation in a session called "Enlivening Literature," for which Walter J. Ong, S.J., will be the commentator. Other sessions could be listed, but it is not surprising to find finally one which is called "Can English Teachers Live with Performance or Behavioral Objectives?" Sooner or later — perhaps it has already occurred — there is bound to be a reaction in the usual fashion; it will be objected that performance is not really a serious, rewarding approach to literary study and that it is, in fact, too simply a skill. The pendulum has swung back and forth between these views for, it seems, forever.

There is legitimate reason for concern on both sides of the question. Interpretation has often dealt with platform skills in too simple a sense, and there are teachers of interpretation who see the literary text as simply a springboard for free-form oral (body) response. I have heard such teachers speak laughingly of the conventional interpreter's concern with the meaning of his text, and on at least one occasion I have heard a teacher inquire hesitantly whether indeed we can know what the poet means by his poem, and whether we ought not to focus our attention on the student's own personal experience, whatever its relationship to the text. I am as much interested as the next person in the whole response of the body to a literary work, and I think that the current concern with behavior in relation to literature is clearly a necessary development, but it seems to me both unwise and dangerous for the teacher of interpretation to see himself as one who is concerned primarily with the correction and manipulation of personality.

It seems to me unwise, and educationally unsound, too, to encourage and applaud the student's exploitation of a poem for sensational effects, though I know teachers who do this. It is not true that anything which "goes" with an audience is acceptable as interpretation. It is possible for students who are encouraged to "do their own thing" to suffer rather permanent damage to the development of their taste. When teachers of English object to such practices, I must say that I find myself on their side. I have seen more oddities performed recently in the name of experimentation than I care to remember. (I am quite aware that "taste" is a variable, and I make no pretense of having any special claim on it.)

But surely these somewhat sensational methods cannot be held to be the norm in the teaching of interpretation, and surely we are not to be judged by them. Those who oppose performance because of its mistreatment are like those who oppose poetry because some of it is bad.

A more serious issue is raised by people who are generally suspicious of creativity. Anyone who has taught what used to be called "creative writing" knows that there are many sober teachers of English who look with great question upon such work, feeling that there is altogether too much mystery — and hence too little scholarship — in the process. The role of "talent" is little understood; it is seen largely as an adjunct to skills, which are in themselves seen as more the concern of professional schools than of institutions seriously concerned with the humanities. It *may* be all right to permit students to

learn poems and read them in contests as an extra-curricular activity, but such goings-on are not to be taken as productive study.

Their objection is not totally without basis. Teachers of interpretation know that there are many matters which they themselves must face which set them apart from teachers of English. They do need to think about pitch and diction and volume and projection and stage fright and mannerisms — and so on — when they hear oral performances. There are many technical matters involved in use of manuscripts, costumes (when costumes are appropriate), properties; in stage movement, playing with other performers in group readings; indeed, in many kinds of details which enter into any kind of performance or production. It is difficult for some people to understand, apparently, how all these matters may finally be thought of as part of the total body of the literary work as it is realized or actualized, and how they may be studied, quite seriously, as aspects of that body. But the good teacher of interpretation always, I think, sees these matters as related to text, and knows that they often provide a way of motivating the very closest concern with text on the part of the student.

Furthermore, while it is quite true that the creative process — and, indeed, the re-creative process — remains something of a mystery, teachers of literature, whether they like it or not, have chosen to deal with art forms and hence have made created art objects their special concern. While I have taken some exception, above, to teachers and students who "do their own thing" with works of literature, I quite willingly recognize that many art forms are *open*, and that reader responses, whether oral or silent, permit the performer must learn a very difficult lesson of humility: that he is performing not for his own glory, but for the service he can yield to the work of the artist he serves. It is this sense of outgoingness, of responsiveness to the body of the literary text, which I, at least, value most of all in the act of interpretation: as in any other kind of human relationship, it seems to me most to represent the humane view.

How wide can the responses be? To that question, many teachers will wish they knew the answer; the only one possible, probably, is that any response must be measured against the clearest and fullest view one can get of what the text is saying, on the grounds that the best reading is the most complex one the text will permit. But if he is committed to the notion that the interpreter is not simply performing but is performing *something* — and that that something is a work of literature — then, he must share the view attributed recently to the pianist Claudio Arrau, in a recent interview in *Life*, that he is performing not for his own glory, but for the service he can yield to the work of the artist he serves. It is this sense of outgoingness, of responsiveness to the body of the literary text, which I, at least, value most of all in the act of interpretation: as in any other kind of human relationship, it seems to me most to represent the humane view.

The paradox — every art and every religion gives witness to it — is that one receives even as he gives. The individual closed in the box of his own ego stifles there, eventually. The minor performer — like the minor writer — is one who repeats endlessly his own scale. However pleasant it may be — and it may be very pleasant indeed — it is unchanging. Education is devoted to making changes in people as a result of teaching them about things around them. The interpreter is taught not simply to perform, but to perform something.

The link between teachers of English and teachers of interpretation is this something. Classes in interpretation can never hope, I think, to cover large period courses in literature; they cannot, usually, be devoted strictly to historical study. While they entail, or certainly may entail, critical papers, they must issue finally in oral performance. While much is to be said, doubtless, for work in interpretation in the English classroom, systematic attention to the actualizing or realizing of texts in oral performance calls for constant practice and criticism, and it cannot ever remain simply a skills adjunct to an English class. The number of texts which it is possible to look at closely and to practice, as an interpreter must, will always be small in any one semester or quarter of time; every inflection, every change in tempo, every movement is sharply related to meaning — to the kind of meaning to which interpreters must necessarily be devoted, to the tensive relations which make "meaning" a living principle. Whether one calls the act of performance a creative or a re-creative act (and the argument seems in

some sense pointless), there is a creative element in any performance; maintenance of the balance between critical scrutiny and oral interpretation remains one of the greatest challenges to both student and teacher, and it is the degree of success in meeting this challenge which perhaps distinguishes the weak from the strong in the interpretation classroom.

I can remember, as a student in high school, the many days when scenes from *Macbeth* were portioned out to members of the English class, read more or less "at sight," suffered through, and then discarded. The hope, presumably, was that treating the play as something to be "heard" was doing it a service. No hope could ever have been less rewarded, since *Macbeth* came out for many students as something only a little more interesting than the Yellow Pages of the telephone directory. It was as if words came from an inkpot, not from the mouths of people; we never inquired into the feeling of characters, never talked about motives, never (indeed) felt anything except (for those of us who enjoyed "acting") a certain pleasure in hearing ourselves reading strange language. If exercises of that sort and that caliber still exist, I am on the side of those who would ask, "Can English Teachers Live with Such Performances?" And my answer would be "I'd rather be dead." Nothing, Shakespeare said, can come of nothing.

But something can be done, even with relatively cold reading, when the teacher and student treat the reading as exploration, asking questions, re-reading, trying alternatives, always with the movement of the whole piece in mind. It is a time-consuming way of studying literature; it will always seem to some people not very economical, and it will always seem to others too entertaining to be serious. Robert Lowell, in a negative view of interpretation, spoke of "humor, shock, narrative and a hypnotic voice" as "the four musts for oral performance,"[1] but many other writers, and some greater than Lowell, have testified to the fact that oral utterance is a supreme test of even the most delicate of texts. Lowell, to be sure, was speaking of public readings, and we must admit at once that there is a difference, a great difference, between the classroom and the public platform. Most teachers of interpretation do not see their job as the preparation of public performers. Nevertheless, it is possible that Lowell was underestimating the significance of performance, subscribing to the view that "successful" interpretation was a bag of tricks. In that case, he was, I think, wrong. Still, one would not choose to read a program of *haiku* over a microphone in the Civic Opera House in Chicago.

Finally, let me report one of my own most recent experiences of the continuing gulf between performers and scholars. In August of this year, I delivered the Margery Bailey Memorial Lectures at the Institute of Renaissance studies at the Ashland, Oregon, Shakespeare Festival. The Institute conducts classes and sponsors lectures in connection with the annual summer festival of plays in two theaters, one a modified outdoor Elizabethan stage and the other a handsome new indoor thrust stage. I had thought that the differences in opinion between scholar and director (and actor) might, in Ashland, have been wiped away because of the common interest in producing Shakespeare. I ought, I suppose, to have known better. While the relationships seemed cordial enough — the festival is indeed a splendid tribute to all who participate in it — it was clear that the "scholarly side" of the endeavor felt that the producing side often spent too much time on monkey business — monkey *stage* business, I should say; "Less activity and more language" was often the silently spoken criticism. And I must confess that I, too, from time to time wished that the actors and directors would trust the playwright a bit more, not feeling it so often necessary to bombast out the blank verse with clever business.

One visiting scholar felt that one of the productions was the worst he had ever seen of the play, his criticism springing almost solely from the frenetic stage actions which the director had employed. It seemed to me in many ways not a bad production — there were not many grievous distortions of character, though there were some; but it is true that often the dialogue seemed simply an accompaniment for business, rather than the other way around, and there were whole episodes where what was said seemed of only minor import. I couldn't really blame the visitor for his view, and it seems to me that the problem he faced is the very problem English teachers often face with interpreters of poems and novels: too much is sacrificed for a stunning piece of delivery.

As I have already said, one must not condemn an art for its violators, and I do not think that modern interpretation is dominated by sensationalists, but the danger lurks, and I think we must never lose sight of it. We train not simply a body, nor simply a mind, but the mind in the body — the human being, from head to foot. We are in no danger, I think, simply because we avoid excess, of becoming, like Pope's Theobald, the occupant of the throne of Dullness. Nothing is more exciting than the act of reconstituting the body, the full body, of any fine literary text.

NOTES

The Conference at Dartmouth College was known officially as the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English; it was held in 1966. Three books appeared as a result of the conference: John Dixon, *Growth through English*, Reading (England), NATE, 1967; Herbert Joseph Muller, *The Uses of English*: Guidelines for the Teaching of English from the Anglo-American Conference at Dartmouth College, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967; and *Language and Language Learning*: Papers relating to the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English at Dartmouth College, ed. Albert H. Marckwardt, Champaign (Illinois), NCTE, 1968. (The third title is concerned with linguistics and attitudes towards language standards.)

This is not to agree with the teacher who doubts that we can know what poems mean. To go that far is to give up the problem of meaning altogether.

"On Skunk Hour," *The Contemporary Poet as Artist and Critic*, ed. Anthony Ostroff (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), p. 108.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL COLLEGE
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INTERPRETERS THEATRE IN THE SECONDARY CURRICULUM

LESLIE IRENE COGER

A classroom can be a lively place when creative youth are trying on roles, discussing meanings in scripts, determining the point of view from which an incident is seen, noting relationships of characters. All of these elements are part of a group activity called Interpreters Theatre. It is an involvement with literature that can enliven the secondary school curriculum. Psychology, social studies, foreign language, literature, speech as well as science, physical education and mathematics can be approached in a way that arouses the student's interest, that causes him to become involved, that stimulates his imagination and furnishes him outlets for creativity. It helps create a high morale, releases tensions, and sensitizes the participants to the elements of beauty in literature. Ideas of social significance, of historical importance, of humanizing interest are discovered in the wide world of literature. As in the program format "You Are There," the students can discover America with Columbus, attend the witch burning trials of Salem; they can be present when great break-throughs in knowledge occur. They can do more than "be present," they can participate. They can step into the shoes of the people making these discoveries, feel as they do, think as they think, for a moment become one with them. This is true involvement, exciting and stimulating. Awarenesses reached in this manner are apprehended with the whole being, are organic.

But before we discuss specific means of using Interpreters Theatre with secondary school students, let us define it and show how it works. Interpreters Theatre, also known as Readers Theatre, is a means of experiencing literature by embodying it. It is a way of bringing literature alive in which two or more interpreters so empathize with the literary piece that their vocal and physical responses cause the audience members, in their minds, to see and hear the characters in action in the world of the literature. The readers share the attitudes, view points, and actions so vividly that the audience, as well as the interpreters, experience the literature, get it in their marrow bones. Vicariously they expand the horizons of their lives. Literature becomes the enriching element it is capable of being rather than a subject that must be drudgingly studied.

One might well ask how this differs from conventional theatre. The uniqueness of interpreters theatre lies in the degree of participation demanded of the audience. There is not attempt at literal scenery, costume, and action as in most conventional theatre. Interpreters Theatre evokes the scene in the mind's eye of the audience. As in solo interpretation, the readers (as a general practice) envision the scene off stage in the area of the audience. Both audience and readers are seeing the scenes in their heads, just as they can see the events of their dreams in their minds. Of course, the audience sees the readers before them at the same time that they see the characters in their imagination. This is the *double vision* that Interpreters Theatre requires. It causes a chain reaction. The interpreters are empathizing with the characters in the literature so deeply that their voices and their bodies respond as the voices and bodies of the literary characters do. The audience, empathizing with the readers before them as they empathize with the characters, also empathize with the characters and through "becoming one" with them, experience the dramatic action of the literature. Just as the audience uses double-vision in seeing the interpreter-character so does the interpreter retain a dual-nature; he is the artist in control at the same time he becomes the character. Through vocal intonation patterns he causes the audience to hear the character and know his attitude toward the actors. Through behavioral synecdoches (a part of an action suggesting the whole) he causes the audience to see the character reacting to the stimuli in the situation.

Intense concentration is needed on the part of all particpants in Interpreters Theatre for the experiencing of the literature to occur. The audience as well as the read-

ers contribute to the "production." Vivid reading is required if the audience is to be stimulated to complete the performance with their imagations. The term "reading" does not mean that the interpreters are actually relying on the script before them to find what words come next. By the time the reader has mastered the script, the connotation as well as the denotation of the words, the type of person who utters them and the motivation for saying them, he will know the words. The script, to some, serves as a symbol of the medium. Sometimes it is used as a property, or to help distinguish the point of view. For example, as when an older person is relating an experience of his youth, the story teller would carry a script, but the young boy might not. Practicioners are experimenting with the use of the script just as they are experimenting with many other facts of this fluid medium.

Many types of materials adapt to this kind of theatre. Although plays are frequently employed, it is not limited to plays. Prose fiction and narrative poetry work very well. Other forms, letters, personal essays, historic accounts, diaries, newspaper column, if they have interaction between two or more characters also adapt easily. Sometimes material without this interaction *per se* can be placed in a context that will give it the necessary dramatic interplay that makes it theatre.

The adaptation itself takes many forms. The material will guide the adapter. With a play, the simplest way to adapt it is to use a narrator to set the scene, introduce the characters, give necessary action, and at times bridge cuts that must be made to fit a time limit. Individual readers will, then, be used for each character. Adapting prose fiction gives the adapter many choices depending on the points of view within it. Some fiction can be treated as described above for a play employing a narrator for narration, description and exposition and using different readers for the dialogue of each character. In some stories no narrator is necessary.The narrative portions as well as the dialogue can be given by the characters as long as the narration is given to the character from whose viewpoint it is told. In Interpreters Theatre of prose fiction the whole script may be given with the offstage focus or there can be a combination of onstage focus for dialogue with offstage focus for narration and exposition.[1]

Interpreters Theatre proves to be a stimulating way of experiencing literature. How can it be used to enrich the curriculum of the secondary school? Since it allows the students to be present at all the exciting events in history, since it gives them insight into people and an awareness of the significance of events, it accomplishes many of the goals of education in a stirring way.

Literary study becomes meaningful when the understanding is essential for the oral reading. Analysis, word study, character delineations, seeking underlying truths are all a necessary part of the preparation for reading the literature aloud, for "stepping into the shoes" of these characters from the narrator to the individuals who participate in the action of the piece. Its values in the study of literature and in speech classes are self-evident. It also enlivens a foreign language class and brings increased knowledge of inflections and the sounds of the words. How better can one learn French than to speak the words of the great French authors? The same applies to other languages. Each language has its physical gestures as well as its intonation patterns that one must "try on" if one is to speak the language truly. Try Moliere's *Les Precieuses Ridicules* or Cervantes' *Don Quixote*; in Latin, read the *Iliad* aloud.

Psychology is richly recorded in literature. Look into a young girl's mental disturbance in *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden* and experience the hatred of the afflicted men for the Big Nurse in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Look into the hearts and minds of two disturbed adolescents in *David and Lisa*. Find understanding of a child's grief and withdrawal on the death of a mother in Ray Bradbury's "I Sing The Body Electric." Try to fathom the generation gap through the play *I Never Sang For My Father* or the short story "The Veldt."

Many science fiction writers open up a world of inventions and scientific principles for us. Alvin Toffler in the book *Future Shock* would have us read the better science fiction writers to help prepare us for the world tomorrow. Remember Tennyson spoke of man flying through the air and traveling under water long before the airplane or the submarine were invented.

The teaching of social science can be greatly enriched through active participation in historical events as recorded in literature. The play *1776* makes the early history of our country a vital concern. The poem "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere" illuminates these perilous times. Life in early America is vividly projected in *The Scarlet Letter*. *The Crucible* and "To Burn a Witch" furnish insights into attitudes towards witchcraft and the horror of accusations without proof. Life in the president's mansion is detailed in *In The Whitehouse*. The politics of Harding's administration is treated in *The Gang's All Here*. *The Andersonville Trial*, and *Guns of August* depict war and some of the problems. "The Lonesome Train" is a graphic picture of grief across our nation as Lincoln's body is transported back to Illinois. The history of the blacks in the United States from early slave ships to the incident in Little Rock is documented in *In White America*. The treatment of the red men is told in the play *Indians* by Koppit. The crisis of industrialism is vividly portrayed in *Waiting for Lefty*. The Scopes monkey trial furnishes the plot for *Inherit the Wind*. Presenting a compiled script of great events would make a wonderful way to celebrate the two hundreth birthday of our nation. History is seen not as something dead and gone but as life when the students become involved in the feelings, the thoughts, the ethics of the people living in these earlier days.

These are but a few topics that could be incorporated into Interpreters Theatre. The lives of great inventors, muscians, artists, mathematicians have been encapsuled, illuminated in literature. Ecology, family relations, religion, mercy killing are others of the many subjects that have been elucidated in literature.

Not any teacher nor any student could cause these works to become living experiences for themselves and the audience. Interpreters Theatre done poorly can be deadly dull. Perhaps the speech teacher could coordinate her work with the subject matter of other classes and allow the speech students to present programs for social science classes, English classes and others. They could present special assembly programs for the whole school. These done well would furnish enriched experiences for both participants and spectators. Interpreters Theatre vividly performed can train students in literary analysis, speech skills, performance techniques, creativity and furnish stimulating experiences for the audience. It can enrich the secondary school curriculum.

NOTES

[1]For further discussion of focus and other elements of this type of theatre see *Readers Theatre Handbook, a Dramatic Approach to Literature* by Coger and White published by Scott, Foresman, and company.

CHAMBER THEATRE

ROBERT S. BREEN

When the storyteller begins, "Once upon a time," the audience prepares for transportation. It is expected that his words and gestures will paint pictures and describe actions for the benefit of the inner eye and the inner ear. However, the outer eye and ear are not neglected; the audience sees the storyteller behaving and hears him speaking. If the tale is successful with the audience it will in large part be because there is congruence between what is seen and heard and what is imagined. The tension or tensiveness created by the double image — the "once-upon-a-time" and the "here-and-now" — assures the listeners that the storyteller is a magician.

This is the tradition of the folk narrator. We look to him as the source of illusion as he transforms himself by voice and gesture into the conditions of the characters in his tale. The more skillful he is the more thoroughly do we submit to his legerdemain. We give over our recognition of his palpable immediacy and begin to "see" for example, the hunter moving stealthily through the brush and we no longer hear only the storyteller, but we hear as well the birdcall he skillfully imitates. We are indeed transported.

The tradition of the theatre is rather different. It dispenses with the storyteller and his epic situation of here-and-now. When the curtain rises the audience is plunged into the once-upon-a-time *as though it were* the here-and-now. The auditors are permitted from the first to enjoy the illusion of seeing and hearing for themselves the actions of the characters without the mediation of a narrator. When the illusion is complete, as it tends to be in realistic theatre, the fictive magic disappears and what transpires on the stage is in the condition of life rather than art.

However, a sophisticated audience appreciates that there is, nevertheless, a double image, as is the case with the epic storyteller. The audience in the theatre understands in a subliminal way that the characters before it on the stage are also actors who have rehearsed their roles and know, as the audience does not, how it will all end. The illusion of spontaneity and free will which the characters exhibit are for the actors and the audience just that — an illusion.

The tensiveness between the character, Othello, and the actor, Sir Laurence Olivier, provides the magical conditions of art. Othello dies in the play while Olivier will live to play a matinee tomorrow; yet Othello is immortal, while generation after generation of players have shuffled off this mortal coil. Art and life are not confused so smuch as they are congruent.

In the epic situation the storyteller is present while the story he relates is past, it is memory. In the dramatic situation the storyteller is generally absent. A notable exception is Tennessee Williams's play, *The Glass Menagerie*, which relies on both the epic and the dramatic situation. We are told by Tom, the narrator, an undisguised convention, that "The play is memory." We are also told by Tom that "I am the narrator of the play, and also a character in it," which means that the audience accepts Tom as the merchant sailor in the epic situation of the here-and-now who remembers his mother and sister in the dramatic situation of the once-upon-a-time past. Unlike the folk narrator, who must recreate the scenes of the past in the audience's imagination, Tom can present his memories in the flesh and the audience is privileged to see for itself what it is Tom remembers. Nevertheless, there is a difference between *The Glass Menagerie* and more conventional plays in that Tom's memories are certain to warp the truth, whereas other plays present their characters undistorted by any point of view.

Williams's play is but a faint-hearted attempt to combine the epic and dramatic modes, though it should be noted that Williams's original text allows Tom to exercise direct control over the memories, calling for music and lights, employing Brechtian effects such as legends and images on a screen, and addressing expository narration directly to the audience.

Stage productions of Williams's play are often less epic than the playwright intended since they generally dispense with the legends and images and do not allow Tom's

mother, Amanda, for instance, to talk to a vacant chair (Williams's stage directions call for this action) as though Tom were sitting there, while Tom, the narrating merchant sailor, stands by the portieres.

Chamber Theatre is a technique I have devised for presenting narrative literature on the stage using all the theatrical devices available in the theatre without sacrificing the narrative element. Like the drama, epic literature has characters in action in a setting and there is often dialogue which creates the illusion of free will and spontaneity so important to the drama. What epic literature has in addition to these dramatic elements is a point of view. The narrator, a character inside the story, or a figure outside the story, provides the audience with a perspective on the action, directing its attention to external or internal evidence that will illummate motivations or underscore thematic relationships.

It is important to realize that narration, the verbal report of things unseen, has always been an element in drama, though a secondary feature. Greek drama used messengers, servants, and the chorus to provide the audience with accounts of matters not presented directly on the stage. The Elizabethan theatre used soliloquies to apprise the audience of the interior state of the characters. In the eighteenth century narration was often thinly disguised when events not seen by the audience are reported by a character to a confidant acting as a surrogate audience. Perhaps the most awkward narrative device ever used in the drama could be seen in certain nineteenth century domestic comedies when the maid and the butler shared expository matters in the form of gossip. Thornton Wilder satirized this device in the character of Sabina in *The Skin of Our Teeth.*

When Realism became the prevailing mode in Western Drama the audience found itself outside the dramatic action. The spectators were in the darkened part of the house while the actors were well-lighted behind a proscenium that established a clear separation between the audience and the play. In contrast, the Elizabethan audience was as well-lighted as the actors and frequently sat upon the stage so that it was indistinguishable from the actors (court scenes, for example). Since the actors dressed in contemporary clothes there was little in the way of appearance to separate them from the audience. It is little wonder then that the Elizabethan drama was rich in narration. It is true that, except for the use of a prologue or a chorus (Henry V, for instance), the characters themselves often provide their own narration (soliloquies have already been mentioned).

While the dramatic mode has made extensive use of narrative devices commonly found in the epic mode, it is equally true that the epic mode has made use of dramatic devices. Modern fiction, especially, makes considerable use of dialogue and action in scene; characters in fiction, as in drama, give the illusion of free will and spontaneous behavior. Now that realism has had its day we find a more poetic drama emerging that affects to make more explicit the interior life of the human condition. The modern theatre is not content to provide the audience with such psychological information as will illuminate the "life" of the dramatic characters, but provides as well such eloquence of stylistic style as will move the audience to participate in the theatrical experience unmediated by illusion.

Playwrights like Brecht, Sartre, Ionesco, and Beckett use language that explores the sensibilities of the audience rather than, or as well as, the characters within their plays. The playwright's direct concern for the audience, for its aesthetic welfare, for its participatory responsibility, is a function of an epic interest seen in contemporary drama with increasing frequency. It is not surprising then that Brecht's Epic Theatre should appear in the twentieth century and that its effect should be so far-reaching.

Historically the theatre has tolerated epic elements as long as they were peripheral to the central action. The Chamber Theatre is radical in that it places the narrator at the center of action, since he establishes the point of view from which the action of the characters is to be viewed. A first-person narrator, who is a major character, will understandably hold a central position in his own story. When a third-person narrator, who is an objective observer, tells the story, the circumstances are more dramatic, less epic, and his position less central. In any case, the narrator is never static in his relation to

the action. Even the objective observer, like the camera, will on occasion move close to the action (close-up) or move away from the action (medium or long shot). It is fundamental in Chamber Theatre that the narrator relate dynamically to the action. If a story employs narration simply as stage direction, it would be wiser to remove the narrator and present the story as a conventional play. Nothing is sacrificed because such a narrator has no point of view and the story will support itself on the stage *as shown*. It follows then that stories with well-developed points of view profit most from Chamber Theatre productions.

It is often assumed that stories replete with action and dialogue, indispensable elements in the drama, are best suited to Chamber Theatre production. This is a mistaken assumption; a story with a well-defined point of view, regardless of the amount of dialogue or action, is suitable for Chamber Theatre production.

Because narrative literature has developed complex interaction of "show" and "tell," more dynamic, more perceptive, and more sophisticated than dramatic literature has allowed itself, despite its recent emancipation from Realism, Chamber Theatre uses novels and short storeis on the stage rather than plays.

Psychology and sociology have in recent years taken a broad but intense interest in the problems of the self. They have recognized the importance of self-realization, self-discovery, and self-identity as critical concerns in the identity crisis of our culture. Literature, too, has shown a similar interest. Mark Schorer says, "Learning to read novels, we slowly learn to read ourselves."[1] Though it can be argued that this is a partial view of the reader's interest, it is nevertheless an important view.

Fiction has treated the problems of the self more fully than the drama because narrative conventions allow for the interruption of action for the sake of exploring motivations at the moment of action. It is possible in fiction, as it is not in conventional drama, to present the following scene:

She laid her head gently on his shoulder, knowing that he would fail to recognize the rapid beating of her heart against his arm. "Are you happy?" she asked.

The same action in a play would allow the audience to see her lay her head on his shoulder and to hear her ask, "Are you happy?" In Chamber Theatre the audience would have the additional privilege of hearing the narrator or the character herself say, "knowing that he would fail to recognize the rapid beating of her heart against his arm."

If it seems awkward for the character to speak of herself in the third person, remember that it often happens in social intercourse. A mother may say to her daughter, "Mother doesn't want her little girl to do that." The mother's reference to herself in the third person has the effect of depersonalizing the relationship between mother and daughter, of defusing a potentially emotional scene in order to provide an atmosphere congenial to understanding. When a character in a Chamber Theatre production speaks of himself in the third person during his addresses to the audience, a similar depersonalization takes place and the hope is that rational understanding will follow. It is a necessary condition for any productive exploration of the self.

A recent play, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!*, by Brian Friel, attempts to dramatize the relationship between two aspects of the hero's character, the public and the private selves. These two aspects are played by two actors, but the experimental nature of the play is neutralized by the author's timidity; he trusts the audience so little that he avoids confusing it by suggesting that the public self never sees or even looks at the private self, though they do talk to each other: "The two Gars, Public Gar and Private Gar, are two views of the one man. Public Gar is the Gar that people see, talk to, talk about. Private Gar is the unseen man, the man within, the conscience, the alter ego, the secret thoughts, the id. Private Gar, the spirit, is invisible to everybody, always. Nobody except Public Gar hears him talk. But even Public Gar, although he talks to Private Gar occasionally, never sees him and *never looks at him*. One cannot look at one's alter ego."[2]

Friel excuses this curious behavior, which allows for verbal exchanges while denying the Public Gar a view of the Private Gar, by suggesting "One cannot look at one's

alter ego." If the private self is invisible to everyone including the public self, by what special alchemy is the *audience* privileged to see him? If the audience may look upon the Private Gar by virtue of a poetic fiat, certainly the Public Gar, who already shares conversations with his alter ego, need not suffer the awkward necessity of never looking at him. One is reminded of the absurdity of Victorian married couples who never saw each other naked in the course of a long life together.

Chamber Theatre solves the drama of the selves with more directness. James Joyce's story, "Eveline," deals with a bifurcated self, a young woman affianced to a sailor who is planning to take her away from her home in Dublin. The narration is in the third person, but the diction suggests interior monologue, indeed interior dialogue:

"She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home, anyway, she had shelter and food . . Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business . . . . She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores."[3]

Two actresses play the role of Eveline — one, the Eveline who wants to stay at home with her father where she "had shelter and food," the other, the Eveline who wants to go to Buenos Aires with Frank, her fiance, and "would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores." Between them they would "weigh each side of the question." There is no awkwardness here, no shyness about looking at each other. If the condition requires some poetic liberty, at least the unrealistic aspect of having two actresses play one role is mediated by the fact that they talk in the third person. As we have seen, dialogue in the third person creates an atmosphere of depersonalization in which matters can be best understood by the audience.

Chamber Theatre hopes to create a special kind of theatrical effect by making the most of two literary worlds. It takes advantage of a play's special dramatic virtue — simultaneity of action, which is in the very condition of life itself — and a novel's special virtue — the exploration of motivations at the moment of action.

NOTES

[1]Mark Schorer, "An Interpretation," printed as an introduction to *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford (New York: Vintange Books, 1957), p. v.

[2]Brian Friel, *Philadelphia, Here I Come!* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), pp. 11-12.

[3]James Joyce, "Eveline," in *The Portable James Joyce*, ed. Harry Levin (New York: The Viking Press, 1947), p. 47.

ACTING AND INTERPRETATION: SUGGESTIONS FOR COMPARISON

MARION KLEINAU and JANET LARSEN McHUGHES

An inevitable question from the beginning oral interpretation student is "What is the difference between acting and interpretation?" To most seasoned teachers of interpretation this question is a perenial source of exasperation. After years of philosophical haggling over definitions, instructors have grown weary of useless arguments, deeming the subject irrelevant to the vitality of their art. Therefore, teachers often dismiss the question with such answers as "That is beside the point," "Whatever works, works," or "Our art has matured beyond the need for such definitions." As logical as such responses may seem to the experienced practitioner, they neither answer the young student's question, nor provide a sound philosophical foundation for the beginning teacher of interpretation. Such abrupt dismissals furthermore fail to deal adequately with challenges posed by teachers and practitioners of theatre. The fact that questions concerning acting versus interpretation are still being asked behooves us, as responsible instructors in interpretation, to take a fresh look at this aesthetic controversy. This article proposes to suggest an avenue of approach to the problem through a comparative analysis of the two performance disciplines.

On a very basic level, both the actor and the oral interpreter are concerned with what might be termed "fashioning an instrument": sharpening the sensory-motor mechanism by which human beings take in and act upon data from both the interior and exterior environments, intensifying and making flexible the emotional-intellectual response patterns by which they deal with the impact of such data; developing an imaginative-empathic approach to phenomena discovered in the perceptual field; and learning both analytical and creative methods by which to approach the literary materials they perform. In more practical terminology, this means that both kinds of artists seek to develop the voice and body in terms of interior processes and communicative abilities, and to learn "ways of working" with their media. Furthermore, both actor and interpreter need a highly developed concentration that will enable the performer to control his instrument in terms of the performance task.

Ideally there is a good deal of commonality between the two arts when it comes to the development of the instrument. Both similarity and divergence exist, however, in methods of fundamental approach to materials, with wider divergence occurring in actual performance. A brief survey of the role of the actor and that of the interpreter will serve as a basis for comparison.

Role of the Actor

The term "actor" carries within it the derivative connotations of "action": an actor is one who carries out action. In terms of the theatre, "action" may be conceived as either overt physical events, or inner psychological events; usually the action of a play consists of some balanced complex of the two. Since the tradition of dramatic performance, whether representational or presentational, requires full materialization upon the stage, the actor needs to be equipped to carry out the physical demands of the action of a script; he should be able to move with skill and control. In addition, the actor should be able to perform, with verisimilitude, specialized forms of physical action: to fence, to dance, to mime. Many times, in performance, greater emphasis is placed upon the actor's physical movement than upon the words he utters. This does not imply neglect of the voice, however. Rather, the actor's task demands that he develop his voice to its fullest power, not only because he is often called upon to perform before large audiences, but because the voice, like the body, orchestrates the role. The actor's voice, then, tends to serve the role rather than the text.

Since the actor's role is usually that of a single character within a play, and he does not change characters during the course of the play, he works toward a full and sustained materialization of character. This involves an in-depth psychological penetration

of character wherein the identity of the actor is submerged in the character. The actor strives to penetrate deeply the phenomenal world of the character and to sustain that world throughout an entire performance. Such a task requires a developed power of concentration focused consistently upon a single line of action. Furthermore, not only must the actor stay within the character, he must interact believably with other "actors as characters." Such a role demands the ability to "open up" to things and people within the environment of the play, and to create a moment-by-moment illusion of the reality of the character.

A play, traditionally, has a director who blends the roles played by actors into a unified, artistic whole, that illuminates and is in some degree bound by the text. Thus the actor is not the sole arbiter of his performance, but must create within the artistic boundaries of script, director, and other performers.

The actor's relationship to his audience is usually an indirect one; traditionally he does not confront the audience member by speaking directly to him. The actor's world is contained either within the realistic scene delimited upon the stage, or within the imaginative sphere connoted by objects and movements upon the stage. The audience member looks in upon or looks at, but is usually not included within the sphere. At some times in theatrical history and in some modern productions, the audience has been included as a recognized element in the performance. When this occurs, however, the actor always approaches the audience as the character, not as himself.

The relationship between actor and text has undergone numerous revolutions throughout the course of theatrical history, ranging, on the one hand from the actor as primary creator and improviser upon a bare plot outline, to the other extreme of actor as interpreter of fully developed, stylistically elaborated pieces of dramatic literature. In the former case the total emphasis falls upon the creativity of the actor. In the latter situation the focus falls primarily upon the configuration of the text which serves both as a limiting melieu for the actor's performance and as a basis of judgment upon it. Acting tradition in the United States has, for the most part, evolved from a textual emphasis, but recent developments in the theatre are pulling the focus back toward the performer. Some modern scripts are specifically written as merely indications to the actor of the direction in which character and action should move. Recent approaches to the performance as an extended and elaborate improvisation upon the text, using basic situations, characters, and transformations from the text, but extrapolating freely beyond the textual structure of the script. In such cases the actor builds upon the script, developing not only his own character configuration, his own interior and exterior action, but, in addition, a great many of his own words which he carries into the performance.

Role of the Interpreter

Like the actor, the interpreter is interested in coming to meaningful terms with a literary text, although the interpreter's appraoch might be compared initially to that of the director of a theatrical production. Just as the director strives for aesthetic balance between all elements of the script—such as characters, language, plot, imagery—so, too, should the individual interpreter assume responsibility for the total structure of his literary text. The interpreter's artistic perspective on his script, then, is generally wider than the individual actor's, and therefore closer to that of the theatre director. Furthermore, the oral reader's interest in literature tends to be more pragmatic than the actor's, since interpretation is often used as a learning tool whereby the student comes to an understanding of the poem, and himself, through the medium of oral performance. When an interpreter performs before an audience, however, his presentation must be, in every way, as competent as the actor's.

Whether preparing for a classroom oral assignment or for a public reading, the interpreter cultivates specialized performance capabilities. He should be able to "embody" a text in its literary integrity: to enter the poem's phenomenological world by giving of himself to the demands of the poem. This act of giving oneself to the literary work has been described by Wallace Bacon[1] as the process of "matching," whereby the

interpreter comes into organic congruence with the life of the poem. When "matching" his experiential world with the world of the poem, the interpreter should feel free to use *all* his vocal and physical resources, literally moving as fully and overtly, or as economically and covertly, as the literature demands. Once full embodiment is achieved, through a complicated interaction between analysis and rehearsal, the interpreter has come to meaningful terms with the *total structure* of a literary work—with its various characters, narrators (if any), prosodies, images, and so on. The interpreter's focus is therefore on the *whole* poem he is performing; his flexibility to move from the phenomenal world of one character to the separate world of another character or to the generalized voice of an undefined persona is one of the significant features of the interpreter's art.

Such interest in the structural configuration of the literature explains the interpreter's tendency to "feature the text"[2] in his performance, concentrating more fully on what is being said (and how) than on who is saying it. The interpreter, therefore, often relies more heavily on the line in its verbal context (its poetry) than on the physical action in its non-verbal context.

Although the interpreter's indulgence in overt *physical action* is usually economized, the reader nevertheless must enter fully into the *psychological action* of his text. It is only with such unfailing commitment to the inner world of the persona that the reader can believably recreate the ontology of his literary work. Moreover, when the psychological action of the script demands physical gesture from the performer, the interpreter is as responsible as the actor to provide such overt expressions of character. The physical economy the interpreter normally employs, however, ironically lends extra significance to his bodily action when he *does* gesture overtly. This phenomenon helps to explain the intense power of a good interpreter's glance or shift of the head; by mere "suggestion," the accomplished reader can often say as much as a broadly gesturing actor. The nature of the script, of course, determines the degree of physical overtness for both the actor and the interpreter; the oral reader,however,will usually feature the psychological action over the physical action.

During performance, the interpreter enlarges the scene of action to include the audience as well as the stage. He often relates to his audience both directly and indirectly, moving freely from onstage focus to open audience contact to offstage focus, as the text demands. Such flexibility in scene location permits the audience member to freely participate in the performance because he is included in the physical locus of the action. Audience participation usually takes the form of imaging, since the interpreter often asks his audience to supply mentally the appropriate costumes, or the full stage setting, or the correct gender of the character, or countless other crucial details. It is the interpreter's task to suggest the inner lives of his characters so fully that the audience members can "see" imaginatively each character. This curious sense of audience participation has led some writers on interpretation to call Readers Theatre "Theatre of the Mind."[3]

A special challenge of the interpreter's art is that he be capable of contacting the audience as himself — in introductions, transitions, and, more subtly, in his references to the script he may carry. The interpreter seeks to achieve the careful balance between full subjective characterization and wide structural perspective, so that any referral to his script (provided concentration is unbroken) becomes part of that specialized literary experience which is the interpretation performance.

Finally, the interpreter acts as a creative liaison between writer and audience, embodying the text as a way of sharing it with an audience. In effect, the interpreter may be subtextually saying to his audience, "Let us look together at this text. I will give you, as fully as possible, its entire structure, including the inner lives of its characters and the sounds of its language; you supply, in your minds, the visual externalities appropriate for the text." The physical script is often held, therefore, as an aesthetic reminder to both audience and performer that the emphasis is on the contents of the text, and that both audience and performer have come together for the complex act of coalescene with that text.

Comparison of Acting and Interpretation

In order to understand more clearly the practical and aesthetic interface between acting and interpretation, one might profitably begin with a look at the fundamental differences between the two performance disciplines. The interpreter's relationship to his audience (whether that audience be the performer's inner self, one other person, twenty classmates, or a full auditorium) is so specialized that it is one of the major distinctions between the role of the actor and the role of the interpreter. Whereas an actor's audience members are always empathically involved, they are nevertheless spectators, looking in on the action which is located within a specified stage area. The actor presents to his audience believable costumes, make up, properties, and stage settings to contribute to the dramatic illusion. The actor's performance, therefore, has great visual appeal to the audience, thereby achieving Aristotelian "spectacle" as a significant feature of the production.

In both a Readers Theatre production and an individual interpretation, however, visual appeal is secondary to auditory appeal, since many visual details are supplied imaginatively by the audience. An interpreter's audience members are empathically involved as participators, not spectators, because the interpreter has purposefully placed his audience in the scene of action. Such distinctions in the actor's and the interpreter's relationships to their audiences suggest a further difference in the purpose of each performer. The actor says subtextually to his audience, "For the next two and one-half hours, believe that I am Hamlet"; the interpreter says, "For the next two and one-half hours, let us look together at the play, *Hamlet*." Both the actor and the interpreter establish the appropriate relationship with their audiences to fulfill their individual purposes.

The second major distinction between interpretation and acting, not unrelated to the first, is the performer's relationship to his text. As Wallace Bacon suggests, "... *The locus of the text is not the same for the reader and the actor.*" The reader enters into the life of the *text*; the actor disappears into the life of *one of its characters*. The interpreter's primary interest in "what is being said (and how)" leads hims to emphasize the auditory qualities of the selection; the actor's primary interest in "who is speaking" leads him to emphasize the visual qualities of the text. Both kinds of performers concentrate intensely on their performances; there is no difference in the *degree* of involvement, but there are significant differences in the *nature* of the involvement. The interpreter can never abdicate his primary responsibility to the full scope of the written text as produced by the author. The actor may play upon character and situational components of the text, even, in some modern instances, changing the surface configuration of the original work.

These guidelines are not meant to imply that the actor has no interest in the poetry of the lines, or that the interpreter is unconcerned with the visual appearance of his character. The above discriptions merely suggest the fundamental trends of the actor's art as distinguished from the interpreter's. Anyone experienced in theatre or interpretation immediately recognizes that the role of the actor and the role of the interpreter overlap in many areas, depending upon the nature of the material and the style of presentation. Epic acting, for example, achieves a delicate balance between the full characterization of the actor and the structural perspective of the interpreter. Similarly, Chamber Theatre (which was founded largely on the concept of epic acting) combines the actor's specified scene location (and onstage focus) with the interpreter's open scene location (and offstage or audience focus).

In the final analysis, however, the most profitable way to approach the comparison of the actor and the interpreter is *to examine the role demands made upon the performer by the literature he is presenting*. A single interpreter who chooses to perform a portion of J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*, for example, will strive to embody all the narrative and dramatic action of the text. The total narrative perspective of *Catcher in the Rye* is, however, so clearly determined by Holden Caulfield's point of view that the interpreter must, of necessity, create a highly defined character at the center of his performance. It may seem paradoxical that, in order to better fulfill his role as

interpreter of the *whole structure* of *Catcher in the Rye*, the reader must approach the role of the actor by concentrating on the development of a *single* character within that work. If the interpreter of *Catcher in the Rye* succeeds in incorporating the traditional interests of the actor in his performance, his reading will have strength and veracity because it fulfills the role demands made by that particular novel. It is perhaps important to point out, however, that this performer of Salinger's novel is still an interpreter, rather than an actor, because he depends upon his audience to participate in the aesthetic creation, and because his textual perspective always remains larger than the actor's. Even the interpreter playing a single role in a Readers Theatre production of *Catcher in the Rye* retains the special sharing with his audience that is characteristic of the art of interpretation.

By the same token, the actor playing Tom in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* will better fulfill his role as actor by approaching the role of the interpreter whenever his character assumes narrative perspective toward the play as a whole. In this sense, the actor portraying Tom will sometimes adopt the traditional role of the interpreter, altough he is still acting because he has created a fully detailed, believable world within a specified stage area separate from the audience, and because his performance ultimately centers on the individual character, Tom, more than it does on the general locus of the script. Whether a performer approaches a script as an interpreter or as an actor, his greatest obligation to himself, his performance, his audience, and his script is to flexiby and artistically meet the various role demands made by the text he is performing.

The difference between interpretation and acting, therefore, can best be seen in terms of the performer's relationship to his audience, the locus of the text, and the role demands made by the literature. Artificial distinctions, such as the presence or absence of a stool on stage, are insufficient and misleading. The use of a lectern or the carrying of scripts does not make a performance a "reading" any more than full movement of the characters makes a performance "acting." The difference is far more subtle and, while it *may* involve the employment of lecterns as opposed to full stage movement, it does not need to incorporate such superficial distinctions. The interpreter should feel free to move as fully as the text demands, just as the actor should feel entitled to economize on his physical action to serve the purposes of his character. Neither acting nor interpretation is artistically served by rigid restrictions on performance creativity.

As educators in interpretation and theatre, we should be training *performers* who are sensitized to literature and to human experience, who are in control of their voices, bodies, and internal mechanisms, and who are flexible enough to move with the demands of the literature, role, and production form. The actor *is* an interpreter: his actions interpret. The interpreter *is* an actor: he conveys action. The aesthetics of performance differ, but a competent performer can always achieve artistic success as either an actor or an interpreter.

Often those who have been trained only as actors are not widely read in literary forms, do not have perspective upon the total structure of a literary work, are not flexible enough to move quickly from role to role, and have difficulty in contacting an audience directly. They sometimes feel awkward in being themselves, or in using themselves as a home base, seeming to be "lost" without costume, make up, props, and broad physical action. They also often lack the strict economy of action which is characteristic of the finest actors, and which is profitably learned through training in interpretation.

Those who have been trained only as interpreters often have great difficulty with physical movement and strong vocal power. Their bodies, not having been trained in larger responses, often do not move in harmony with the inner intensity of the performance. Voices which are effective in a more intimate setting are not usually developed in strength, falling short when larger demands are made upon them. Sometimes unable to move out of their own phenomenological worlds, interpreters often lack creative freedom, and cannot achieve the necessary degree of character materialization, especially when a full characterization is demanded.

These deficiencies, however, are largely the fault of the training techniques employ-

ed, rather than inherent weaknesses in acting or interpretation. Actors often do not sharpen their line readings. Interpreters often do not train their bodies. Students are too frequently trained in a form called "acting" or "interpretation" rather than being taught to take on many different literary structures, roles, and production styles. A more practical teaching approach might stress the control and development of physical vocal, and emotional, sensitivity through the exposure to many different kinds of literary forms and production styles. The student would, therefore, develop creativity in terms of *the entire literature-performance complex* rather than becoming stifled by regulative definitions of "acting" as opposed to "interpretation." Those who are essentially "interpreters" will grow and develop with the kind of training usually given to actors; likewise, "actors" will improve their own skills and discover new ones through serious work in interpretation. The development of many different approaches to performance can only strengthen a performer, provided that the core of the training is honesty, concentration, and responsiveness to the nature of the defined task at hand.

NOTES

[1]Wallace A. Bacon, "The Act of Interpretation," *Oral English* (Spring, 1972), 2.

[2]For a full application of the concept "featuring the text" to the art of Readers Theatre, See Joanna Hawkins MaClay, *Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice* (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 3-6.

[3]See Leslie Irene Coger and Melvin R. White, *Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1967), especially Chapter Two: "Readers Theatre: Theatre of the Mind."

[4]Wallace A. Bacon, *The Art of Interpretation* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1966), second edition, p. 373.

FOR THE SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE: A MANIFESTO

MICHAEL GALATI

Any worthy analysis of literature either begins or ends with the reader. After all, there is something comic in the splendid efforts of some critics to detach themselves from what they read as if the author's craft were something that could be isolated in a test tube of an objective laboratory or as if the effect of the work were an abstraction separable from the individual reader on whom it supposedly works.[1]

Ciardi wisely noted that one does not speak of "What does a poem mean? " One awaits his noticing that it is similarly inappropriate to ask "How does a poem mean?" The beginning of any analysis is the simple, "What has happened to *me*?" One cannot see a work until he sees it in terms of himself. Let the reader concentrate always on the fact that *he* is the reader. That *he* is there. That *he* has not disappeared and is not dead to work. He is irretrievably bound by emotion and body and mind to the work, and any forgetting of self, any attempt to speak of the work per se, cleaves the chain that fastens the work to its effects. It is as if the work were *cause-full* but *effect-less*. It is as if there were an agent of action but no particular object to be acted upon.

But being an individual reader has been abolished, and every critic out of our current schools fancies himself humanity at large, writ in Roman caps; and when he speaks of effects, he speaks of effects at large, that is to say, of nothing at all.

Yet no writer has written in order to be read objectively; no work exists as literature excepting it to be read subjectively, with passion and with love and with all the deeper stirrings contending within. This is the task of the reader and of all the would-be critics of literature and is the only task the writer can recognize. Of course, those who read in scholar's robes can comment elegantly even if they have not read with passion, or even if they neglect their passion the moment they begin to speak. One can be captivated by their restraint and their emotional aloofness from the work. One might even be convinced that anyone who has spoken so beautifully and so well and so knowingly of such a complex matter had surely spoken the truth, for if we can imagine truth coming to us, surely we must imagine it coming in such a way and with such grave and quiet dignity. Yet this precisely is untruth. Though everything said may be entirely true, it nevertheless is untrue. Conceivably one may speak of circles and triangles and spheres in such a way and have truth. One may even read Euclid in such passionlessness and have truth. But unless one reads in passion, whatever it is the writer of literature put on paper was never really read at all, and all the comments about it are untruth spoken by men with eyes of glass. Only passion reads, and so only passion understands.

To read with passion is to be in relationship with the work, to be unsevered, so to speak, or to be alive to every pulsation of the work. It is to exist next to and within and on top of and under the work. It is to respond to the work, even in the fibres of the body, with whatever the work calls up in the reader.

It is conceivable, of course, that two such readers may respond differently, perhaps one with dread and another with longing; and should both speak of the work and one say the work is of dread and the other day it is of longing — is it not conceivable that both may speak the truth, making what has happened to them their departure point? For what other statement can be made other than that about what has happened to the reader? And should an objective reader come and say that he has textual proofs that this is a work of dread and not of longing at all, what shall we say to his proofs? Shall we not say that he should begin with himself and his own relationship to the work and leave his proofs to those who imagine that works are separable from him who reads? It would be better for him to admit to having felt nothing at all than to speak in this objective sense about the dread. Who claims the work to be a work of dread, cites the dread-ful lines, and yet has nothing of dread within: is he not a liar? Are not the dread-ful lines dread-less? Then let him begin with himself. Let him say that I, this certain reader at this certain time, have known dread on this night in these lines, and we shall

have more truth and more promise of scholarship in this beginning than can be found in all the finished tomes of objective criticism.

Let him even admit to uncertainties about the dread-filled lines, and he still speaks with greater understanding than he who has properly and objectively dissected the passage to be observed, carefully dividing and classifying, even perfectly noting all subtleties. Yes, for he knows what it is to exisit in the same way that the work exists, though he may fail in conceptualizing, while the other way is only — objective.

There is a sense, indeed, in which the work and the reader are the same, in which the one is synechdoche to the other; or in which the work is a replica of myself and myself of the work so that I can look within and learn the truth of the work and look without and learn the truth of myself. I am, in a sense, in equation with the work. Where it lives, I live; where it grows, I grow.

It is absurd, of course, to think of a work as existing in such a way, as if it could be born, grow up, and so forth exactly like the reader. Yet the real absurdity is the objective dissector of the lines. Let him carve and whittle; he sees it may be dreadful. Let him probe and divide; he is a little convinced of it. Let him classify and explain; he sees more of it. Let him find a system and the logic of it and lo, he is all convinced. But just there he is wrong. The lines for him were dread-less, and after all was said with him he looked only on the husk of dread. Dread itself had sped away, even as he had inched forward; and as he leaped into certainty that indeed here was dread, there was nothing at all but the comic futility of the meaningless, however brilliantly the conceptualizing had been managed.

And what good is it that he may even teach us his analytic so that we too may be clever and perhaps even astonishing? It would be better for us were he simply to make us open to dread. That is all. The fault of readers is not that they cannot shred literature in the prescribed critical fashion. That can come. It is that they cannot live. It is that they have become so insulated from life (by the objective style in all of life?) that neither dread nor longing are viable realities. The book in their hand dies because they themselves have fixed upon it the gaze of their own lifelessness. Would he teach the reader to read? Let him teach the reader to detach himself from the objective, for such a reader has become like one laughing at a joke because an authority on humor has judged it humorous and has, perhaps, explained it all.

The object of analysis is not the work alone. It is the work and the reader in tandem. And the relationship of work and reader is not some doctrine about the work or some intellectual or conceptual expression of itself. The relationship is the passion. Does anyone wish to know if a given critic has misunderstood? Look to see if he has converted that relationship into the intellectual. So one must not be deceived by the brilliance of his intellect. One must not even be deceived should he express sorrow about the inability of the school boys to see the dread he has carefully pinned up for them in his little exhibit. The moment he neglects the self, or the moment he turns the passion into intellect, he has failed to understand.

One is reminded of that objectivity quoted by Earl Daniels in his *The Art of Reading Poetry*. Here he presents in analysis of Frost's "Stopping by Woods" the following example of student writing:

> Almost every day we find ourselves faced with the lures of temptation. We realize that we ought to keep on our way, yet the temptation to stay where all is peaceful and quiet is often too great for us to resist. While we are here in college we are often tempted to do the easiest thing. That is, to neglect our studies and to run around and have a good time. However, we know that there are promises to be kept and obligations to be filled. We have been sent here by our parents for the purpose of receiving an education, and there is no doubt that our duty is to do all in our power to take advantage of this opportunity.[2]

At first glance one might claim this to be the result of subjective analysis on the part of the student. But it is the reverse. Here is a reader who has severed himself from the poem and has asked the worst of objective questions, "What does the poem mean?" If

instead he had asked the subjective questions, "What has happened to me," and had answered then that he had become anxious in the face of choice and had anticipated the potentiality of guilt in the neglect of promises, in the conflict of promise with desire, he might well have sprung from there into a deeper reality for both himself and the poem. Indeed, he might have understood more deeply than his professor because perhaps he had a greater passion over these things than did he who taught him.

But the student failed because he had fallen into the errors of objective analysis on more levels than one. Like the objectivist he had failed to distinguish sign and symbol. The sign, in literature, is interchangable at the reader's will. It has no inherency and merely is present as a signal to the reader of a something else, and that "something else" may change with the reader's whims. The symbol, on the other hand, though it often carries various and even contradictory connotations, is inherent to the culture and the time. It cannot be arbitrarily assigned by the writer or changed by the reader, because it in itself possesses power which *of necessity* calls up its meaning. This is where the subjectivist asks his "What has happened to *me*?" "What is this symbol doing to *me*?" This is the symbol's power, and its guarantee of steadfastness.

Symbols, of course, are always symbols in terms of the community, which in turn can recognize itself in the symbol. They point to some reality in the culture that is ultimately unsymbolic or else to some invisible thing that has no material existence except in its symbol, and there is no question but that the readers of such cultures will respond to the power of the symbol in proportion as their culture has influenced them concerning it. Furthermore, symbols do not erode excepting by the gradual erosion of mythic structure through which the culture perceives reality. For example, the troll myths of the Scandinavians fail to arouse the fearful passions they once did in the Norse. So too Wordsworth's complaint,"I'd rather be/ A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn," reveals helplessness when confronted with symbols that have lost their power. In the same way every reader of *Giants in the Earth* for whom the trolls, or the wrathful God, or the grace of the sacrament are mere broken symbols of a past reality is helpless to know the deepest passion of the novel. At least in part, the synechdoche offered the reader is broken, and he can do little more than intellectualize these stirrings or speculate as to what they might have been to another. The symbol cannot be reconstructed nor can its effects be realized by such a reader.

The difficulty with the student, of course, was not that the symbol was broken. One can see the seed of it in his remarks; it was that he treated the symbol as if it were a sign to which he could attach his own fancied interpretation. He saw it as effectless within himself, failing to ask of it, "What has happened to *me*? Conceivably, had he looked within and then honestly discovered that the symbol had no effect, then he might well have professed it either a sign or a broken symbol. If the first his discussion would then be as inconsequential as the sign; if the second, his awareness of the brokenness of the symbol and discussion of that brokenness would perhaps in themselves constitute a valuable analysis under the limitations imposed, for such an analysis would have to be in terms of the nothingness that had happened to *him* as opposed to what may well have happened to others who stood under the power the symbol once possessed. Not as much, perhaps, as if he could hear "Triton blow his wreathed horn," but the compelling honesty of it is the only beginning he could have.

So the good critic is not known by his mind as much as by his heart. He has not become erudite rather than passionate. Rather in his passion basic to whatever erudition he has. He devotes himself to the examination of work and self together, looking within himself as much as he looks within the work, giving his criticism this extra dimension. Out of such he realizes the only depth of which one may seriously speak, the depth that comes from seeing things in related whole.

NOTES

[1]For additional background on the subjective, see my "A Rhetoric for the Subjectivist in a World of Untruth: The Tasks and Strategies of Soren Kierkegaard," QJS, LV (December, 1969), 372-380.

[2](New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1941). Cited in Earl Daniels, "Outline for a Defense [1]of Poetry," *Patterns in Writing*, ed. Robert B. Doremus, Edgar W. Lacey, and George Bush Rodman (Dryden Press, 1956).